



CHESHIRE

Berkshire County



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NARRATIVE

Narrative

The Town of Cheshire has a unique monument to a famous cheese, and an interesting history. The valley town was founded in the 1760's by Baptists from Rhode Island, the first settlers in the region who were not of the established Puritan Church. The early colonists were mostly descendants of those who had followed Roger Williams to Rhode Island in their quest for religious freedom. One of the prime movers of the emigration was Colonel Joab Stafford, who built his house on Stafford Hill and led the men of Cheshire into war during the Revolution. The troops from Cheshire distinguished themselves at the Battle of Bennington.

Cheshire was incorporated in 1793, and its residents were strongly partisan in the election battles of the country's early days. The election campaign which put Thomas Jefferson into the presidency was hard fought and Cheshire was the only Berkshire town which favored Jefferson. When their candidate won the election, the town searched for a way to show their support and pay a tribute to their new president. Because Cheshire specialized in dairying and making cheese, they decided to send a gift to the president of a Cheshire cheese, but one using curds from every farmer in town. The resulting huge cheese was four feet in diameter, 18 inches thick and weighed 1,235 pounds. It was moved on a sled drawn by six horses when it was shipped off to Washington, D.C. by water, where it drew a personal letter of thanks from President Jefferson. One of the two monuments in Cheshire commemorates the cheese; the other memorializes the founders of the town. The Pioneer Monument is on Stafford Hill and is a fieldstone replica of Benedict Arnold's Norse Mill in Newport, Rhode Island. The view from the monument is arguably one of the most beautiful views in the Berkshires.

The town had early forges and saw mills, grist mills and tanneries, and in 1812, the Cheshire Crown Glass factory opened as did a triphammer operation. The town also boasted the first factory in western Massachusetts to manufacture cotton making machinery. Daniel Brown put 14 water looms into his cotton factory in 1827 and the making of shoes, cotton fabric and cheese were the mainstays of the town's 19th century economy. The town's reputation for religious diversity continued, and in 1885 there were only 1,537 people in Cheshire but there were four different churches.

The rural town has ben taking on recreational and residential overtones in modern times, with 225 acres of open slopes and wooded trails for skiers on Farnhams. There was in the 1940's a three-quarter of a mile straight run at the Cheshire skiing area. In addition, there has been good fishing in the South Branch of the Hoosic, which originates in Hoosac Lake in the town.

(Seal supplied by community. Narrative compiled from historical materials.)



GEOGRAPHY

Location

Northwestern Massachusetts, bordered by Adams on the north, Savoy and Windsor on the east, Dalton on the southeast, Lanesborough on the southwest, and New Ashford on the northwest. Cheshire is about 10 miles north of Pittsfield, 138 miles northwest of Boston, and 157 miles from New York City.

Total Area: 27.55 sq. miles

Land Area: 26.94 sq. miles

Population: 3,479

Density: 129 per sq. mile

Climate

(National Climatic Data Center)

(Great Barrington Station)

Normal temperature in January.....20.1°F

Normal temperature in July.....68.1°F

Normal annual precipitation.....44.8"

U.S.G.S. Topographical Plates

Cheshire, Windsor

Regional Planning Agency

Berkshire County

Metropolitan Statistical Area

(1993 Definition)

Pittsfield



GOVERNMENT

Municipal Offices

Main Number: (413) 743-1690

[Telephone Numbers for Public Information](#)

Form of Government

Board of Selectmen

Open Town Meeting

Year Incorporated

As a town: 1793

Registered Voters (Secretary of State 1994)

	Number	%	
Total Registered	2,034		
Democrats	576	28.3	%
Republicans	206	10.1	%
Other parties	1	0.0	%
Unenrolled Voters	1,251	61.5	%

Legislators

[Senators and Representatives by City and Town](#)



DEMOGRAPHICS

Table DP-1. Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000

Geographic Area: Cheshire town, Berkshire County, Massachusetts

[For information on confidentiality protection, nonsampling error, and definitions, see text]

Subject	Number	Percent	Subject	Number	Percent
Total population.....	3,401	100.0	HISPANIC OR LATINO AND RACE		
SEX AND AGE			Total population.....	3,401	100.0
Male.....	1,706	50.2	Hispanic or Latino (of any race).....	15	0.4
Female.....	1,695	49.8	Mexican.....	1	-
Under 5 years.....	171	5.0	Puerto Rican.....	7	0.2
5 to 9 years.....	212	6.2	Cuban.....	4	0.1
10 to 14 years.....	264	7.8	Other Hispanic or Latino.....	3	0.1
15 to 19 years.....	232	6.8	Not Hispanic or Latino.....	3,386	99.6
20 to 24 years.....	142	4.2	White alone.....	3,329	97.9
25 to 34 years.....	371	10.9	RELATIONSHIP		
35 to 44 years.....	567	16.7	Total population.....	3,401	100.0
45 to 54 years.....	591	17.4	In households.....	3,401	100.0
55 to 59 years.....	219	6.4	Householder.....	1,367	40.2
60 to 64 years.....	146	4.3	Spouse.....	818	24.1
65 to 74 years.....	272	8.0	Child.....	972	28.6
75 to 84 years.....	162	4.8	Own child under 18 years.....	732	21.5
85 years and over.....	52	1.5	Other relatives.....	107	3.1
Median age (years).....	40.6	(X)	Under 18 years.....	36	1.1
18 years and over.....	2,606	76.6	Nonrelatives.....	137	4.0
Male.....	1,293	38.0	Unmarried partner.....	64	1.9
Female.....	1,313	38.6	In group quarters.....	-	-
21 years and over.....	2,487	73.1	Institutionalized population.....	-	-
62 years and over.....	575	16.9	Noninstitutionalized population.....	-	-
65 years and over.....	486	14.3	HOUSEHOLD BY TYPE		
Male.....	231	6.8	Total households.....	1,367	100.0
Female.....	255	7.5	Family households (families).....	986	72.1
RACE			With own children under 18 years.....	417	30.5
One race.....	3,379	99.4	Married-couple family.....	818	59.8
White.....	3,340	98.2	With own children under 18 years.....	332	24.3
Black or African American.....	13	0.4	Female householder, no husband present.....	115	8.4
American Indian and Alaska Native.....	3	0.1	With own children under 18 years.....	55	4.0
Asian.....	21	0.6	Nonfamily households.....	381	27.9
Asian Indian.....	6	0.2	Householder living alone.....	316	23.1
Chinese.....	5	0.1	Householder 65 years and over.....	116	8.5
Filipino.....	-	-	Households with individuals under 18 years.....	445	32.6
Japanese.....	-	-	Households with individuals 65 years and over.....	346	25.3
Korean.....	1	-	Average household size.....	2.49	(X)
Vietnamese.....	-	-	Average family size.....	2.92	(X)
Other Asian ¹	9	0.3	HOUSING OCCUPANCY		
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander.....	-	-	Total housing units.....	1,470	100.0
Native Hawaiian.....	-	-	Occupied housing units.....	1,367	93.0
Guamanian or Chamorro.....	-	-	Vacant housing units.....	103	7.0
Samoa.....	-	-	For seasonal, recreational, or		
Other Pacific Islander ²	-	-	occasional use.....	12	0.8
Some other race.....	2	0.1	Homeowner vacancy rate (percent).....	1.3	(X)
Two or more races.....	22	0.6	Rental vacancy rate (percent).....	5.3	(X)
<i>Race alone or in combination with one</i>			HOUSING TENURE		
<i>or more other races: ³</i>			Occupied housing units.....	1,367	100.0
White.....	3,357	98.7	Owner-occupied housing units.....	1,151	84.2
Black or African American.....	21	0.6	Renter-occupied housing units.....	216	15.8
American Indian and Alaska Native.....	12	0.4	Average household size of owner-occupied units.....	2.58	(X)
Asian.....	26	0.8	Average household size of renter-occupied units.....	2.00	(X)
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander.....	-	-			
Some other race.....	7	0.2			

- Represents zero or rounds to zero. (X) Not applicable.

¹ Other Asian alone, or two or more Asian categories.

² Other Pacific Islander alone, or two or more Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander categories.

³ In combination with one or more of the other races listed. The six numbers may add to more than the total population and the six percentages may add to more than 100 percent because individuals may report more than one race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000.



HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

Home Sales (Banker & Tradesman) -

[Town Stats - Free market Statistics](#)

Subsidized Housing Units (DHCD 1998)

[DHCD Subsidized Housing Inventory](#)

Subsidized Housing Units: The number of housing units which count toward the municipality's 10% goal for low- and moderate-income housing. It includes both subsidized affordable units and market rate units in certain eligible subsidized developments.

Public Housing Units (DHCD 1999)

Conventional State: 0

Conventional Federal: 0

Rental Assistance(DHCD 1999)

State (MRVP): 0

Federal (Section 8): 0



TRANSPORTATION

TRANSPORTATION AND ACCESS

Cheshire is situated in Berkshire County, a region of hills and low mountains that widen to create the Berkshire Valley in the south. The major cities and towns are linked together by U.S. Route 7. North Adams and Pittsfield are major points of entry for rail freight into Massachusetts, and the region has several commercial airports. Public roads and highways meet the requirements of modern transportation.

Major Highways

The principal highway is State Route 8, which runs N-S between North Adams and Pittsfield.

Rail

There is no passenger or freight rail service in Cheshire, but the network of intermodal facilities serving Massachusetts is easily accessible.

Bus

Cheshire is a member of the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority (BRTA), which provides fixed route service to Pittsfield, Lanesborough, Adams, and North Adams. User side paratransit services are available for the elderly and disabled.

Other



CULTURE AND RECREATION

LIBRARIES

[Board of Library Commissioners On-line Library Catalog](#)

MUSEUMS

(American Association of Museums)

None

RECREATION

[Telephone Numbers for Public Information](#)

Recreational Facilities (Recreational sites and activities)

[Department of Environmental Management Recreation Section](#)



MISCELLANEOUS

HEALTH FACILITIES

(Dept. of Public Health 1992)

Hospitals

None

Long Term Care

None

Hospices

None

Rest Homes

None

UTILITIES

[Telephone Numbers for Public Utilities](#)

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NOTE: The COMMUNITY PROFILE draws information from a diversity of sources. The main source of information is listed under each section. In some instances comments submitted by the municipality were incorporated to correct and/or enhance the information obtained from the main source. However, no changes were made to those data bases which must be consistent throughout the state. DHCD has made efforts to ensure the accuracy of all data in the COMMUNITY PROFILES, but cannot take responsibility for any consequences arising from the use of the information contained in this document.